



# The Omen Volume Thirty Nine Issue Six

Norman  
Rockwell

*Playbadger*

# Omen Layout Staff: 'Till Death Do Us Part

## Starring:

Grace Willey

Jon Gardner  
Jokp

Rachel Ithen  
Das Omen

Stephen Morton  
My ridiculous Uncle Edward

F. Stewart-Taylor  
\*Sound of breaking retina\*

Alex Bearcouthere

Maddy Firstyear

Christian Matesanz  
The sofa bears don't know

Ben Batchelder  
Templeton Blancmange

Breton Handy

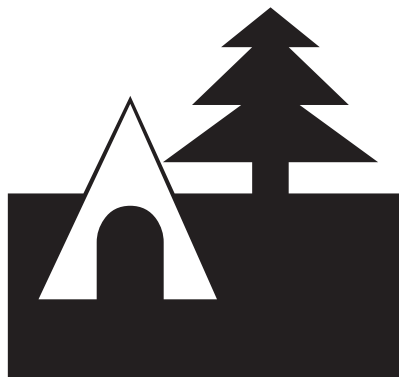
Submissions are due always, constantly, so submit forever. You can submit in rich text or plain text format by CD, Flash Drive, singing telegram, carrier pigeon, paper airplane, Fed-Ex, Pony Express, or email. Get your submissions to [omen@hampshire.edu](mailto:omen@hampshire.edu) or F. Stewart-Taylor, box 1092

## Policy

The Omen is a biweekly publication that is the world's only example of the consistent application of a straightforward policy: we publish all signed submissions from members of the Hampshire community that are not libelous. Send us your impassioned yet poorly-thought-out rants, self-insertion fan fiction, MS Paint comics, and whiny emo poetry: we'll publish it all, and we're happy to do it. The Omen is about giving you a voice, no matter how little you deserve it. Since its founding in December of 1992 by Stephanie Cole, the Omen has hardly ever missed an issue, making it Hampshire's longest-running publication.

Your Omen submission (you're submitting right now, right?) might not be edited, and we can't promise any spellchecking either, so any horrendous mistakes are your fault, not ours. We do promise not to insert comical spelling mistakes in submissions to make you look foolish. Your submission must include your real name: an open forum comes with a responsibility to take ownership of your views. (Note: Views expressed in the Omen do not necessarily reflect the views of the Omen editor, the Omen staff, or anyone, anywhere, living or dead.)

The Omen staff consists of whoever shows up for Omen layout, which usually takes place on alternate Thursday nights in the basement of Merrill on a computer with an extremely inadequate monitor. You should come. We don't bite. You can find the Omen on other Thursdays in Saga, the post office, or on the door of your mod.



THE OFFICIAL OMEN HAIKU:

**Views in the Omen (5)**  
**Do not necessarily (7)**  
**Reflect the staff's views (5)**

Front Cover  
Back Cover

# EDITORIAL

## Mad Props

by Ben Batchelder

Hey folks,

I'm busy here at the Omen, moving your articles and pictures around for the viewing pleasure of the Hampshire community I love so very well. My right hand is extremely cold for some reason and there are copious samosa crumbs scattered carelessly all over my new, blue, super-comfy thrift store sweater. I am about 20 minutes into Mahler's 10th Symphony but for some reason it feels like I've been listening for years. Dense, emo German music tends to have that effect on me. I know I'm sitting here in my chair but it feels like I've been climbing a mountain.

It's been a funny sort of layout. Fiona initiated a strange, polite, suburban roleplaying game of her own design entitled "Thanksgiving." I didn't quite follow it but last wills were discussed and I think somebody was about to commit avuncicide when the Indian food came and Stephen Morton (class of '93) read aloud selections from badkidsjokes.tumblr.com, a great majority of which were scatological and surprisingly absurdist.

I drew some pictures in this issue! But there's plenty of other things to look forward to in this issue. There's an article about a study abroad trip to Jordan, a bunch of pictures of Mark Twain with cats, and of course, Tons and Tons of Deathfest.

Shoutout to Rachel Ithen, who just recently shed the mantle of signer and passed it on to Jon Gardner. Shoutout to Jon Gardner, who is shaping up to be quite the little Omen tykester. I remember when I first became the editor, how intrigued I was by all the inner machinations of FiCom and InDesign. It's a fun process and if you have the stomach for it I highly recommend it.

For this Editorial I would like to publish pictures of who I consider to be two of the sweetest, most kindhearted people on the Hampshire faculty, Marie Johnson and Joel Dansky.

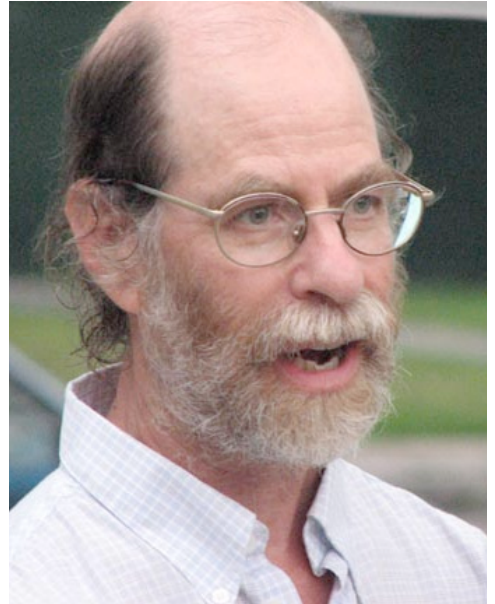
Marie Johnson

- student liaison to laborious, convoluted waters of funding at Hampshire
- understands but does not belittle our overwhelming clue lessness
- has connections
- suspiciously happy to help
- clean



Joel Dansky

- student disabilities services coordinator
- basically your personal procrastination coach/academic therapist
- acknowledges that academia is frustrating and emotional
- soothing voice and bedside manner
- likes calendars
- cool beard



Shoutout to these guys too. They helpful and kind and make life here at Hampshire just a little bit easier. Yay these guys!

I should go to bed soon, I'm just about done with this layout and I've got work in the morning. I'll have to finish this symphony back in Enfield and let it lull me to sleep. Take me home, Gussie!

Until next time, I remain  
Your signer,  
Ben Batchelder



T



# SECTION : LIES

sdfjkgghjsdgkjdhg

Submitted by Rachel Ithen as  
a test of the webmail server

"Two Prostitutes" by cellar-fcp on DeviantArt

submitted by Ben Batchelder







men

Submitted by Stephen Morton

# DEATHFEST CHARACTER SHEET submitted by SAM REEVES

## HOW TO PLAY:

1. Roll *to hit*, add *Melee* or *Ranged*, whichever applies.
2. If *to hit* is higher than the target's *AC*, the attack hits, otherwise it misses.
3. Roll *damage*, *damage* is subtracted from the targets *HP*—if *HP* is 0 or below, target dies.

Name: Fela Kuti  
 Level 5 Nigerian Prince From The Internet

Starting HP: 21      Current HP:

0 means you're DEAD.

## Attributes:

**Strength:**

-1

*Raw physical power*

**Dexterity:**

-1

*Quickness and coordination*

**Constitution:**

-1

*Toughness and resilience*

**Intelligence:**

3

*Thinking and problem-solving*

**Wisdom:**

3

*Common sense*

**Charisma:**

4

*Force of personality*

## Other Stats:

**AC:**

14

*How hard you are to hit*

**Fortitude:**

5

*Resistance to disease and toxins*

**Reflexes:**

0

*How fast you react*

**Will:**

5

*How strong your mind is*

**Initiative:**

3

*How fast you can plan and act*

**Melee Bonus: +4**

Cane

2d6+2

20

2

*Roll this for damage*

*If your die shows this... Multiply by this!*

**Ranged Bonus: +2**

Rifle

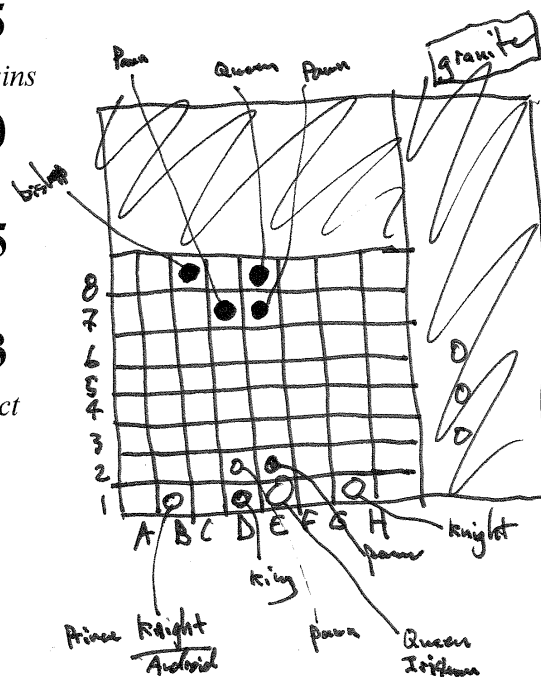
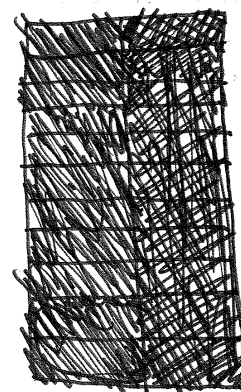
1d10

20

2

*Roll this for damage*

*If your die shows this... Multiply by this!*



## Level 5 Nigerian Prince From The Internet

### **Abilities / Powers / Idiosyncrasies:**

#### **Your Long Lost Brother Left You An Inheritance...**

Yes, and Barack Obama's campaign was financed by a Nigerian Prince from the interne-- Shit. Uh, anyway, you attempt to persuade an unfortunate fool to write you a bunch of checks for absurd amounts of money after giving them checks of your own that will conveniently bounce when they try to deposit them. Target must make a DC 16 wisdom check to avoid being beaten with a dunce cap repeatedly and taking 2d4 damage and being stunned for a turn.

*Three Times Per Tier*

#### **Mr. President? I Need a Favor**

Well, the cat's out of the bag. You're the real reason for Barack Obama's election, and now it's time for him to give you that favor he owes you. What will you ask for? A nuclear strike on an enemy? An army of belly-dancing lemmings? Only you know the answer to this...

*Once Per Deathfest*

#### **Rumor Monger**

You can't resist spreading outrageously false and absurd rumors about anything and everything. For some weird reason, people tend to believe you despite the ridiculousness of what you say. Regardless, you just can't help yourself and continue to spread your lies at every given opportunity!

*Passive/Flavor*

### **Description:**

You exist only through misspelled spam emails that many people seem to fall for with impressive aplomb, yet you also managed to finance Barack Obama's presidential campaign. Don't ask me; shit's weird.



Tower people locked away for heinous crimes. Roll! The door is unlatched. You hear voices outside. Player steps outside, finds unit ~~unit~~ <sup>unit</sup>. He goes down stairs. Roll dex... 8 He makes it down the stairs, sees a large chessboard. Next player (activist) goes down to the chess board. 12. Goes downstairs, begins acting out a chess game, standing on white king square. The chessman screams at the Irishman to convince his Jesus. It does not work. Next guy goes downstairs, he takes place at black queen. Moves to check the guy playing as white king. Giant red hand smashes the black queen for moving first! 6 Day! The next guy begins counting the stairs, looking for a punch. The next guy is going to check out the chessboard. All the time gets spontaneously drunk! The chemist likes the progress. She goes down the stairs. She misses a step and takes 1 day! The next guy takes his seven heads down the stairs and the chessman. Double 4's! 12 day to both! Nigerian Prince assumes BT knight. Other bottle of rum offers long Island Ice tea to all chess spectators and knight. 10 days! Android rolls and lands on knight! 2 day Next player goes downstairs, sits in middle on the four squares. Red hand smashes her. 5 day! Next player decides to examine the cell, take a drink. The back of the cell explodes! 5 day! Rum gets the dragon that burst into the cell very drunk. The dragon breathes fire on the long island ice tea, exploding it and angering him the other 6 day! Next player turns the fuckaway! Jack Sparrow gets away. Reflex save for all not on the board. She becomes paranoid. One player gets knocked against the ceiling for 3 day. Next player becomes black bishop. He weds/winks at black Queen. The Irishman speaks to Goliath pie should I be 19+4+2 reflex white Queen!!! The Queen yells at the rum! Enter HOT CHEMIST! Hydrochloric acid mixed with one of the rum bottles. Some other sulfate gets dumped on our chemist! HOT CHEMIST leaves. Crutiness ensues and I lose track of like 6 fucking stacked abilities. Lina's Cabbell's now sends SWAT. in! She doesn't tell them who to attack and they begin ruthlessly beating all who are not on the board. 7 day! Chemist is beheaded from the awful beating. FIRST DEATH Next player goes on occupied white square takes 3 day and is placed on other white knight square. Android attacks Queen with Nigerian Prince... missed, attacks King square because there's no king. The white king almost gets shot, but ducks at the right time. Rum takes a day! Prince spreads rumor... fail and now nobody believes him. 6 day because the GM is a fucking dumb slut who can't play chess! Android and Prince are knocked off the board. Liar tries to get somebody to drink a long island ice tea, and it fails. The Red Head also gets drunk and fucking attacks. 7 day to lots of people 2 DEATHS.

I'm dead

Yaaaaa

## SECOND ROUND

SECOND ROUND I started this life as a line. I turned myself into a square... I learned how to work geometric knots and now I'm a 7-dimensional diabetes testing supply salesman. 'I am a rocking chair.' 'I am a chest bunny.' 'I am a giant spider.' 'I am a 7-headed samurai.' 'I am Halle, an assault android.' 'I am a random encounter.' 'I am something.' 'I am the world's greatest racer and a fantastic rock.' 'I am an Irishman who can talk to God.' 'I am Linus Caldwell. My now saved my axe, and my dad won't let me have the end of it...' 'The 3 of us are bottles of rum, the last of which has HCl.'

YOU ARE in a ball room with alpacas (It's the alpocalypse) dancing to gentle accordion music. You are on a mission. The Chess Champions will recognize the master Red Hand (RH) who is also a Master Baker. You have passed my first test. Now die or find the Alpaca with polka dot lips! ROLL The Dust bunny hops ~~out~~ out of the spider's pocket and gets stepped on. 1 day. Everyone at half health maximum. The dust bunny dances with the Alpacas... they are confused/unfazed by your presence. The spider rolls to stalling the Alpaca and chucks out their lips when they yelp. Unfortunately, they don't yelp. Nothing gained. 7-headed hydra jaws this smart into an Alpaca's mouth. The others are like - ~~we~~ ITS begins arguing w/ himself... 3 Alpacas spit on him... 6 day! Android attempts to use logic to convince the Alpaca like about some shit, but it doesn't help. Random encounter - 'I have to look for Alpaca somewhere... And I need a companion. Let us go to a random place!' Ejected to another game. Nobody knows where 2 players went! Captain Calcon - 'Does the Alpaca have to be alive?' NO so, he shoots a fire ball at the Alpacas. It missed horribly, and he takes 2 day for being dumb. The Irishman stabs an Alpaca (rolls 7), stabs his own hand 3 day. Linus goes up to the Alpaca and entices them with fake food to check their lips. They disregard the bait because it is actually a fake nose. Rum ~~the~~ orders shots! 19! Shots! Shots! Shots! Shots! Shots! 'Alcohol is no good for my diabetes!' The rum is like the best rum in the whole eth'ic world. Ever the Alpacas and the Red Hand take shots! The second battle spins violently in a failed attempt to walk, 5 day. The 3rd botchy orders more shots NAT 20! Don't forget this rum bottle also contains HCl. Only the rum are spared from the Nat 20. Everybody else takes 4 damage and - 2 on next 3 rolls. The Alpacas are drinking (and subsequently vomiting) the HCl everywhere. 'Alcohol is bad for my diabetes.' The uses 'exponentiation' special ability to make his diabetes glaucoma. His diabetes is now raised to the 5th power... 3 random reflex saves to avoid being trampled by raging diabetes. 'It's 7+ dimensional raging intelligent diabetes. I have testing materials for sale.' RANDOM VOICE - 'Fucking joke contest to make the Alpaca laugh.' The rocking chair perceives 'choke contest', attempts to strangle an Alpaca, who is still doing shots. Nothing really happens, now he's on an Alpaca. The dust bunny feeds some random shit containing yeast, creating expanding yeast dough which blows up the Alpaca's head sending flying biohazard farmyard animal shriek everywhere. Android spontaneously becomes Mary Magdalene and gains special powers he is too drunk to feel. Takes day from acid shampoo, special powers automatically react by laser blinding the Alpaca's headless body and tossing it around the room. 6 day 'What is an Alpaca's favorite movie? Alpocalypse Now!' Android sees the special AP and promptly dies. FIRST DEATH Spider - 'How do you get ready for a camping trip? Alpaca your things!' They're real drunk and they love that joke. Roll. NAT 20 Spider and another player recognise the polka-pacca. The Irishman grunts the direction of the animal and the drunk RED HAND passes him from the test! There is another test! But RH was too drunk to talk about it. 5 day - Avoided - counter attack at RH with hail of arrows. RH catches every single arrow. Linus, near death, He's got a record that's longer than mine... well it's long... long speech attempts to get them to lie down to end the acid-puke-alcohol-everywhere thing. It works on half. Rum 1 offers a long island ice tea to RH, which smashes the glass and kills the RH. The dead Alpaca smells like rum. Rum 2 offers long island ice tea to 2 players. ENTER DOG! Captain stabs the drink down his throat, smashing glass, killing him. The Rum 3 spawns (magically) a fish in a long island ice tea for the dog, who's on a quest for fish. He summons a pack of wolf ghosts! They float over and look sad cause they can no longer hunt fish. Many players begin crying violently and drown in their own tears, take 2 or 3 sad day. The ghosts fold away as the fish dissolves into the HCl. Enter a mad pink scorpion Alpaca with polka dot lips from random encounters new random location. All behold the ugly creature. Plain of symmetry power - 'I hereby apply new symmetry' Raising it to the power of  $e^5$ . QUANTUM DIABETES?!?!? It retains its mass, but shrinks to the point of localized singularities! For 5 deaths! 6 survivors. The Chess Grandmaster (replaced by a headless Alpaca baby) is fucking freaked out. He needs Everybody to eat until they explode! Rum 1 and 2 have to eat the world's best pizza. Rum 1 takes 2 day.

Dust bunny decides to make the clot allergic to her. Z dug from sneezing! HCl boogers oooh! Spider crawls behind the bottles to startle them into the black hole. Run 2 drives directly into the diabetes black hole, feeding it, expanding it drunkenly. The event horizon is wobbling visibly. Run 1 gives himself and the black hole long island ice teas. The center of the black hole is sentient, but the event horizon is not. It twists and contorts, and the diabetes black hole vomits into Run 1. He is not Run, gin, vermouth, poison, HCl, and some other shit. The black hole is "croakety." Calcon toys some shit and runs smack into a pillar. Spider attempts to climb the pillar, NAIL. She slips and falls into the black hole with dust bunny in her pocket. Dust bunny hops out doltly, loots the spider, and lands softly. The black hole spontaneously vanishes. Spider dies!

Survivors play in tier 3!





# Deathfest Twitter Feed-

## Submitted by F. Stewart-Taylor

6h Noah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
The more I beat this joke like a dead horse, the funnier it gets. Right? #deathfest

6h Noah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
#deathfest #deathfest #deathfest #deathfest #deathfest

7h Noah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
Also, I totally almost made it to tier three. I totally would have if I joined the Mole-sheviks #deathfest

7h Noah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
This totally makes up for that submission I was totally going to give to the Omen, right? #deathfest

16h Ben Batchelder @benbatchelder  
Today I turned into a camel and sucked up fat from bystanders in my immediate vicinity #Deathfest

17h Zachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Tim once was the King of Spain. #Deathfest

17h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Once i was the king of spain, now I eat a humble pie #deathfest

17h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Everyone must be lucid from the lack of sleep. #deathfest

17h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Tim sings. #deathfest

17h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Tim wins deathfest. Gets a stick. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The king of spain, winner of Deathfest, never attacked, and lost ONE hitpoint... #DEATHFEST

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Ian gets his character sheets STABBED INTO TWO. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
King of scotland crowdsurfs on tree people. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Ian uses once per deathfest to carry him and the third player off the edge. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Scotsman gets last turn, he's making it good. #death-

fest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The king of spain gives laissez-faire to the land. #deathfest

18h Zachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Well you're still all out of cards, aren't ya?! #Deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The scotsman and the king of spain are plotting. The third player doesn't like it. He's pretty screwed. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The sky turns pretty, and the tupperware turns into argyle. Two people turns to go. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The three remaining players are discussing what to do. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Everyone gets one turn. Well. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The librarian is also dead? Thanks for #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The world: Everyone is floating in viscera. Welp, that happened. #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
Quetzalcoat's severed head hits you into spacetime. Thanks for playing #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
This exchange is not OK for children, the state, or anything else says the librarian #deathfest

18h Zachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
It really is the apocalypse is they're using the Papyrus font. #Deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
ONE action til the end of the world. Papyrus font. #deathfest

18h Zachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
What is with Alex's obsession with "viscera" and "visceral"? #Deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
There's an emotional barrier between us, notably your ribcage? #deathfest

18h Grillerdude @grillerdude  
The scotsman sacrifices, revenge is taken, the shield of the scotsman halves the revenge? #deathfest

## The Omen · Vol. 39, #4

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The scotsman is volunteering someone to die...  
#deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Everything is pizza, Spain is now spacetime. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
"Who is still alive?" TOO MANY PEOPLE, ITS 3 AM. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
+7 for taking time and pizza again. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Giant Quetzalcoatl. Tim takes off the conquistador helmet. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tupperware gets stabbed with the khorne sword. Everyone gets a free tupperware. Thanks for playing #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Clock is down to three! #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Presenting the clock with an empty mountain dew full of gore? #deathfest

18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Aaaaaand Connor is now the gore-scape that is #Deathfest tier 3.

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
If this is not pizza, i do not know what it is. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Gore exponentiates to the fifth power. #deathfest  
You're no longer a person, you're a landscape. You've turned INTO DEATHFEST ITSELF.

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
I have no freaking clue what's going on. #deathfest  
Extradimensional space turns into blood and diabetes and badger photos.

18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Connor wins pretty much everything. #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Id like to fold myself into this realm. All of my juicy crevices, quivering bits, hairy appendages, and all the embedded diabetes #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude

Running as fast as lightning... while an angry god smashes his fists. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The pyramid turns into Quetzalcoatl. Well then, #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
"You look proud, like you think you did right." Nope, that's the wrong move. The clock wants more blood. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Exploding the pedestal. No more blood sacrifice? #deathfest

18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And the Kid narrates himself and takes control of his own destiny. #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The fist corking the bottom half of your body comes out, and you take 12 points of damage. Thanks for playing #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Woohoo, blood in the chalice. Alex grabs a handful of dice. "I will always love youuuuuu" #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Killing Nostradamus via rubber band? #deathfest

18hEmma Lerman @Emmax713  
I was killed by bees, brought back to life from shadow world, got an Oscar, and then was killed by blowing up the sun. #deathfest#goodtimes

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Nostradamus just got foiled by the gatling gun turning to argyle. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
A blown up sun, diluted blood sacrifice, crashed atlantis, and a calendar made of argyle #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
They missed... Now reflex save from a supernova. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The star is trying to blow up the mayan calendar at the end of the world? #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Generating booze, then washing yourself over the edge of the world. Thanks for playing #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Atlantis is falling on people? Wat? 7 points of damage. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Evidently the fifteen turns was NOT fifteen rounds.  
Fifteen people get to go. Well then. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The clock is vain? #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Coked-up magician jumps off of pedestal to his  
death. Thanks for playing #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Taking snuff to avoid being dive-bombed by doves?  
#deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Magician shaking his hat, bones of assistance falling  
out. #deathfest

18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Ian (the King of Scotland) just AOE'd a whole  
ton of folks with bagpipes. #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Bagpipes made from organs of dead people. He's  
making bagpipe noises. Group will save. #deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
It's not like i have a bunch of blood-- OH YES I DO.  
I killed a bunch of people and took their organs and  
bones. Thanks Ian. #deathfest.

18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
The counter went from 15 to 14. This #Deathfest  
may not have any winners

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Fourteen turns left #deathfest  
18hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
At this distance, Tim's King of Spain accent is en-  
tirely indecipherable. #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The world ends in 15 turns. ETA to end of #Death-  
fest : approx. 5 hours.

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
HOW ARE THERE SO MANY ALIVE PEO-  
PLE?!?!?!? #Deathfest

18hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Ian goes with the angsty teenager, not the one year  
old. #deathfest

18hKMMorris @kateison08  
Best fucking round #Deathfest

19hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
As a one year old scotsman, Ian is very hairy. #death-  
fest

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara

## Vol. 39, #4 · The Omen

Is this like Mountain Dew or ass in my mouth?  
#Deathfest

19hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Drink the green. is this like mountain dew or like ass  
in my mouth?#deathfest - It's Coke Zero?!?

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I would appoint her to Ministry of Defense for Es-  
pania. #Deathfest

19hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
I'll also point out that I went to visit with other  
friends for an hour, and came back and #deathfest is  
STILL GOING.

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Ian's Scottish accent is killing. Just. Dead. This is the  
mini-game of perfect voices. #Deathfest

19hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Ignoring the fountain, because it's keeping Ian from  
being the king of scotland? #deathfest

19hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
+3 for pizza related rolls, and +4 for taking his time.  
#deathfest

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I have +3 for pizza relates roles and +4 for taking my  
time. #Deathfest

19hKMMorris @kateison08  
Three accents in one round, beautiful #Deathfest

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
"I'd like to claim this land for Scotland" - Ian #Death-  
fest

19hKMMorris @kateison08  
IT'S NOT EASY BEING GREEN #Deathfest

19hKMMorris @kateison08  
Kissing Condors <333 #Deathfest

19hEmma Lerman @Emmax713  
Still awake. Oh god. I need sleep. Why haven't I died  
in this game yet? #deathfest #dontjudge

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Taking down the #Deathfest banner with Warshow.  
It's an honor and a privilege.

19hKMMorris @kateison08  
We just killed so many babies #Deathfest

19hKMMorris @kateison08  
Merry and Pippin are ouuuuut after quite the fight  
#Deathfest



## The Omen · Vol. 39, #4

19hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
When its time to die at #Deathfest do it with dignity.

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
“Interpretive dance is the medium of fools and heretics.” #Deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
FOOLS AND HERETICS #Deathfest  
20hNoah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
Hi mom #deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Tim sounded the least put-upon ever, I’m shocked. #Deathfest

20hNoah Loomis @NodahLodomis  
Wait, so the omen prints all the deathfest tweets? #deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
The worth of Art as defined by Deathfest #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente@invictuz\_rara  
Aaaand Alex just stole my art heart. #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
We’re going to wear the beret! #Deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
That’s the squid that killed me #Deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
BIG BAD PLAID #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
This might be the cruelest #Deathfest to animals to date.

20hKMorris @kateison08  
...eating Dominos now oops #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Jaguars are afraid of concepts larger than them. #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
That’s a crafty way to finish off folks in tier 3. #Deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
Cerberus on a surfboard #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Also by his lovely spurts of “Ah!” whenever a player makes a roll.#Deathfest

Expand  
20hKMorris @kateison08  
SCOOOOOOBY and bad chase montages YES #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And the quiet of Tier 3 is softly punctuated by Alex breathing into the microphone. #Deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
When there’s a hesitation about a dice roll, it’s always bad.#deathfest #tier3

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
5 points of broken heart damage. #tier3 #deathfest

20hHarry Grillo @redbassett  
“I guess try to get outnumber of the room I’m in?”  
“There are two options: up, or death.” #deathfest #fb  
from South Amherst, MA

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
“Pass me the giant dice” Which one? All of them. #deathfest #tier3

20hKMorris @kateison08  
breaking out the “Your Mom” already, wow #Deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Everyone returns to full health. Enjoy when you can. #Deathfest#tier3

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Jeopardy the Tier 3? #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
It is the end of the evening and the end of the World. #Deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tier 3: The Apocalypse. #deathfest

20hKMorris @kateison08  
Tier 3 begins. #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Grace and Connor killed the audience with math. #Deathfest

20hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Apokealypse! Grace is just adorable. #Deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Diabetes quantum black hole. WTF. #deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Alpaca-lypse. Good one. #deathfest

20hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Fucking molesheviks. #deathfest

20hHarry Grillo @redbassett  
“Bring your friends, we’ll kill them too.” #deathfest  
from South Amherst, MA

21hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Tier 2 and Deadgame prizes at #Deathfest

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Almost to tier 3. #deathfest

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Mary and Pippin used "Exit pursued by a bear"  
WHILE romancing me and got into tier 3. Wat. #death-  
fest

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
It's midnight. I'm exhausted, have a migraine, and am  
getting sick. Staying for tier 3 because fuckit. #deathfest

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
WHY ARE THEY SHOWING STAR WARS EPI-  
SODE ONE?#DEATHFEST

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
AAAND THE WAIT FOR TIER THREE BEGINS  
#DEATHFEST

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Romanced to death by Mary/Pippin. #deathfest  
21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Horrible rampaging union of grim reapers... on  
strike? #deathfest

21hKMorris @kateison08  
Side-tackling sharks into oblivion while wearing a  
chicken suit#Deathfest

21hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Episode 1, #deathfest ? Really?

21hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Actually Doctor Manhattan. #Deathfest pic.twitter.  
com/ESKJz4mm

21hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Painfully aware that there's a giant, 3/4 dead squid in  
the room.#deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Totally not Doctor Manhattan #Deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
Trying to shoot squid in the face, it's not turning out  
so well#Deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
BRO DO YOU EVEN LIFT!?? #deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Life bringing, shirt tearing, threats exchanged, "Do  
you even lift??" --"Does that count as seduction?"  
#deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I'm fibrous? I'm lots of things, but I'm not that.

#Deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Soooo, the Zord is destroying electromagnetism.  
#Deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I would like to make a persuasive growl. #Deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Too convoluted for #deathfest Uh oh...  
22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Launched myself into the hatch of the zord. One HP  
left. #Deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Bomb-fish-UAV-bear thing left, giant half-dead  
squid showed up. Welp. #deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Expanding black hole of diabetes keeps drinking  
rum #deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Died by black hole singularity crushing #deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Using ability to make everyone eat. "Thank god be-  
cause we've been taking shots for hours. But sentient  
rum doesn't have a mouth"#deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
THE CHICKEN SUIT SAVES ME FROM THE GI-  
ANT SQUID #Deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Gordon Freeman had no last words, fittingly.  
#Deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Thank you your majesty, I will suck many souls in  
your honor!#Deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
@kateison08 Yup. Accents are the best. #deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
Ghosts and crochety old uncles #Deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
Might be time to break out the accent #Deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
"It's like the ultimate makeup... being dead." #death-  
fest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Now Man Freed from a Vending Machine. #Death-  
fest

## The Omen · Vol. 39, #4

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Pippin has the upper half of Mary extruding from his shoulder? #deathfest

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
I'm gonna smoke this pipe... cautiously. But not inhale? #deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest I'm just going to sit here and wait to see where things go from here. Take a dexterity check

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
@invictuz\_rara But i have an attack that does 2d4+2 emotional trauma damage? #deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
A bear attached to a bombfish, mind #Deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
We just sent a bear with UAV wings to another deadgame #Deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest tried to use fake nose to block alpaca acid corpse spray. Nose success

22hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tier-porting a bomb inside a fish with a bear UAV attached. Like ya do. #deathfest

22hKMorris @kateison08  
I'm an agent in a chicken suit, stuck behind a jelly-fish tank #Deathfest

22hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I will not be horribly damaged by emotional trauma so long as no one presses my buttons. I'm stuck in a vending machine. #Deathfest

22hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest has opened a joke competition to make the drunk alpaca smile. The rocking chair took that to mean choke all the alpaca

23hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest it's a seventh dimensional projection of diabetes raised to the 5th power

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Just rolled a -14 reflex save at #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Both the grandma and bear UAV made it into this dead game. #deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
You've successfully aimed your mouth at the fish... roll damage. #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara

"Yes the little man is still standing in front of you."  
"Good, I wish to stab him in the face." #Deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I'm famished, can I eat it? #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
@invictuz\_rara How do you get to the dead game without a d20? #deathfest

23hHarry Grillo @redbassett  
For those of us coming late, what tier is #deathfest on right now?

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
"I should mention, puppy is not a puppy. Puppy is a giant man in armor who got beaten badly in tier 1" #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Folks not having a d20...gg guys. #Deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
"What are you again?" "On fire!". #Deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Daniel's luck when rolling hasn't changed. It's still atrocious. #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Jesus christ, first dead game death. #shitjustgotreal #deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Family gathering, not diner. #correction #deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The dead don't need food, but they're going to the diner anyways. #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Niall kills it. #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Hoping my batteries stay alive so I can live-tweet the third tier of #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
@invictuz\_rara Always molemen. #deathfest

23hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
It's the alpacapolkalypse at #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Buh bye Ben. #Deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Hell of lines deadgame at #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Dead game!! #deathfest



23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Attendance record! One more than the past record!  
#deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Not molemen! Never molemen! #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Well, these prizes are hilarious. Grandma won a  
prize for dancing, then fell down the stairs. dancing.  
#deathfest

23hKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Stop making people dance #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
YEAH JAEK! #Deathfest

23hGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tier one prizes? #deathfest

23hZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Reconvening time post Tier 1! #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
There are too many snakes on this flying bus. Seri-  
ously guys.#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
\*rolls die\*....."That might be a 1...." #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
"You know, this all comes from my father...". Will as  
Cthulu.#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
A careening boulder lands in Central Boston.  
#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I'd like the city to make a will save. #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I'd like to do a Ken Burns style documentary of the  
city of Boston.#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Take 9 points of "oh god I'm being swarmed by coy-  
otes" damage.#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Welcome to the climax my friend! If you think you  
can do a better job, be my guest! #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I can still hear Bera's laugh through the wall. #Death-  
fest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Everyone is using their once per deathfests. #death-  
fest

## Vol. 39, #4 · The Omen

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Who now is perceived as the natural enemy of many  
animals, the honey badger. #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Dead as shit thanks to Cthulu. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
You rolled a natural 20 plus 15. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
You're just being dragged into the bathroom yelling  
niceties at Cthulu. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Dying, so using once per #deathfest.

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Bear realizes the chatbot is a chatbot. #deathfest

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
The #deathfest dragon is now a shot of rum

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
They are a mile high cylinder of drunk Irishmen  
#deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Your mind fills with clarity, also hornets. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Dancing grandma died :( #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Grandma dances so hard that she avoids a falling gi-  
ant. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Grandma is dancing too much, so she has to dance  
like a grandma.#deathfest

17 Novdaxelkurtz @daxelkurtz  
It's the Harvard-Yale football game today. Every time  
someone in the Square mentioned The Game, I thought  
about #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Surprisingly enough, I want to punch Clippy in the  
face. Perfect.#Deathfest

17 NovJuliet @prynnette  
I want to be in The Omen Deathfest tweet collection  
too! #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Take 4 points of snakesnakesnake damage, as your  
entirely world dissolves to snakes. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The grandma has to dance until her next turn?

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Who mounted whom at #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
“Are you gonna use your constitutional right to bear arms?” “I’ll have to” “Make a... constitution check”  
#deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
As a drone, am i like a rocket drone? You’re a bear.  
YES! #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
“I pull my brim down and give a dashing smile.”. “He vomits scorpions.” #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tier is so confusing the DM can’t even keep track.  
Wat. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tie the giant’s shoelaces together. But, you tie yourself into the middle. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
He takes.....mire damage than a though. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
dumb expression til next turn. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And Keenan, you’re being devoured here. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
He’s a bear... with wings. Who can only speak bear.  
#Deathfest

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest I’ll be your black king

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest I need a black king!

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I may be a woman of God....but I’m super OG.  
#Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
You’ve declared his face ungrammatical. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
The zombie’s grammar is incorrect. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Adorable cat is playing dressup? #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara

The cultists just take the off. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
People don’t like their d20. Lame. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Pulled out of a large hat by a grandma. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
This guy thinks this ain’t improv’d....#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
The most lovingly ineffectual cultists ever. #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
A fight for life over a small dog. #Deathfest

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest, the place where anthropomorphized rum can get itself drunk

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Okay, make a Dex check. ehrrrrrr.....8? #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Look that up under ass-kicking! #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Hey hey hey, keep the game design somewhere else.  
#Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Bunch of preserved lips in a bottle #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Fatman is a seathog....#deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
#deathfest WE ARE IN THE INTERNET!!

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Who likes foppish behavior and has a general distaste for the poor?#Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Level 5 Socially Awkward Social Network. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Yeah Will Shattuc! #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
“better than having your lungs ripped out of your mouth” #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
On the floor at #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Tier one: y12k #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Going for “Last Bus Out of Arkham” in #Deathfest  
17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Aaaaand David got the #Deathfest history wrong.  
Spirit, sure. PC stuff?

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Locking your friends in a room for the greater good:  
#Deathfest.

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
After this night, there will be neither world nor play-  
ers. #deathfest

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest triggers deep feelings in me

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Deeeeeeeep neeeeeeds #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Alex was the best choice for Master of Ceremonies  
for #Deathfest

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
#deathfest the d12 doesn't even go here

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
d4: most painful. d6: most common d8: stupid. d12:  
Also stupid. d20: useful! d10/100: go to hell. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Yay meatsacks! #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Shut up JB. #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Death: not mandatory, but inevitable. #deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
And this #Deathfest PowerPoint is made by Fiona  
since its slathered in Nixon.

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Richard Nixon presiding. #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Lots of offense, both intended and non-intended.  
#deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
Grace is clearly the most adorable DM at #Deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
“I’m Jake, I’m immortal. Fuck!” #deathfest

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
“One day i’ll stop drinking and pass div III” #death-

fest

Expand

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
Bitches won’t sit down. Alex loves corpses. #death-  
fest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
#Deathfest: might have figured which tier I want.

17 NovGrillerdude @grillerdude  
#deathfest is a roleplaying tournament, just abbrevi-  
ated. Roll a d20. Fail your check and die.

17 NovKaitlin Rosen @kthepterodactyl  
Not 5 min into #deathfest and I already spilled the  
doctor pepper. Way to go, me

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
There are....reporters sorta here... weird. #Deathfest

17 NovRachel Ithen @AnotherEcho  
No way @invictuz\_rara ! Hope folks are having fun  
dying and killing at#Deathfest, sad I couldn’t be there!

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
I also have the sinking feeling I will be the sole con-  
tributor to the the live-tweeting of #Deathfest

17 NovZachary Clemente @invictuz\_rara  
#Deathfest will begin soon and I have the feeling I’m  
going to die second.





# SECTION



# HATE



## Fucking Ghosts

That serious dilemma posed to eliminate  
the strata of our civilisation has  
been dropped on our plate --  
to live and die or to accept it just as.  
Those clouds are rumbling  
down this corridor  
asking as they're screaming  
What could this all be for?  
These broken dreams and shattered  
prospects will rise back to us  
Once we let our unREFERRED  
crying ghosts carry on their contorted plus --  
the fetish of the already dead  
the joke of our stale bed.

Ian W Sloan



(Copy of an e-mail sent yesterday 11/09/12 to Housing Operations and its members concerning Hampshire College's New Off-Campus Housing Policy)

-

Good day,

I am writing as a concerned, first year, international student attending this college. This change of policy deeply unsettles me. My concern is the following: What if I simply do not have the funds to pay for on-campus housing? What if I am a second year student, my family financial situation changes, but financial aid cannot cover this change? What if this happens, I apply to off-campus housing, 200 places are filled (hypothetically), and the other 50 places are given to others based on seniority? Will this mean that I either live on-campus or lose my status as a Hampshire College student?

I just cannot imagine this, especially in an 'all-inclusive' college Hampshire deems to be. When I accepted to attend to this institution, it was GUARANTEED that I would be able to access off-campus housing after my second semester. And now this changes, affecting not only me, but I am more than certain many more students who simply cannot afford the housing fees Hampshire College has.

I'm sorry for my rashness, but this is a reflection of just how preoccupying this policy switch is.

Thank you very much for your time,  
Xavier A. Torres de Janon



## What about the Digital Age?

Nathan Anecone

How is the digital age influencing us?

Every generation tries to piece together a story to make sense of what is in the first order a lifetime of fragments and glances in the senses of the surface of a world which is mostly outside what the sense tell, in a vast churning nether of unobserved events beyond perception. From such a story, which binds the unobserved to the observed, our experiences coalesce into a knitted, consistent framework, an overall post on which to rest direct experiences. Maybe it's a genuine formula that the simpler a historical time period is in terms of information complexity; the easier it is to map it with a story that makes deep human sense. In times long past there were typically less people, cruder or no communications technology, fewer competing worldviews, and more homogeneity among local populaces. Everybody lived close together and if they found out about what was going on in someone's life it was done in the range of earshot. So it was easy and to be expected that everybody positioned themselves in the cosmos in reference to a broad unifying narrative that was easy to get everyone to agree on or at least discuss regularly, such as a religion. Whatever the reasons people have for coming to believe things, one of the reasons is as prosaic as informational constraints. There was simply not much else around to believe at a time, fewer possibilities in what to believe. Here are a few impressions.

Today, things are different. What we have is a frenetic hyper-rearrangement of data in the web, out of which we piece out patterns, ideas, beliefs, designs and plans. So called digital natives each receive a personalized acquaintance with the endless pile of human blab, scandal, rant and insight from a stream of interactions over a sequence of web-pages. They also add to it each day. In exact order, each stream of web-page accesses, web searches, and contributions is likely to be uniquely distinctive to each person. Be that as it may basic statistical principles hold that some segments of web-history across individuals

will have some alignment and similarity: people who like baseball will visit baseball sites, people who like Star Wars will be more inclined to check websites related to such topics and so on. Holding this premise in mind, and if true that our worldviews arise out of an interaction between our minds and informational media and that the web is the principle medium today, it can be seen how the present configuration generates an unseemly chaos. What kind of teacher is the internet? A wacky, disorderly one at least. Or it's as manageable as you can come to control the parts that you access. It all depends on how it is used. But is there really anyone who doesn't lose themselves, zombie-like, in impulsive and unplanned regimens of web-surfing? I have never met such a stalwart character that could resist such rambling.

General commonalities are hard to find across large sectors of a highly differentiated ecology of content. People forge more and more distinct conceptions of things as they trudge over the web. Some do so only faintly linked to tradition, some are completely unbounded from it. Content sharing helps create relative equilibriums in what users are thinking and discussing on the web, yet when you have each person mixing and matching access of distinct sets of web content where each of the sets have no significant sharing across the way to each other, you get the scenario where it seems pretty damn likely that no single individual is arriving at the same beliefs and assumptions when they learn from or take information from the internet.

When many believe the same thing together, it makes for continuity and stability, without which there is a disquieting sense of isolation and fragmentation. It's hard to get much done in a room full of people who completely disbelieve in what everybody else has on their minds. Now picture the web as a big such room. Conversely homogeneity can breed stagnation, as the same chain of ideas repeats in the memories of a people with no new idea emergences to cause a perturbation that leads to a qualitative transition in thinking patterns. The large branching factor of the internet provides an unfathomably rich pool of possible combinations for ideas, but there is no unity to it all. Interacting with people over the internet is a strange affair. If you don't know them also in



person, who are you talking to? Some phantom that has appeared out of the deep, could be six thousand miles away. Imagine it: every day there are hundreds of thousands or millions of people more or less roughly adopting the same posture: legs bent, back slouching slightly, wrists whisking, fingers tapping and clicking, eyes tracking. That's millions of homo sapiens peering into, building off of, altering and graffiting a gargantuan, systematically pulsating, electromechanical grid of... what? "Well of course what they twiddle with is a big wad of internet." This gets said in the most commonsense tone. But it fails to acknowledge just how much the internet is changing everything in curious, wonderful and perhaps terrifying ways.

How does one make sense of the digital age as a whole? This seems to be an absolutely futile question. It is an era of multiplicity; there is too much of everything and no single human can ever collect a panoramic view of the internet in its erratic mesh of human stories, cat pictures, scrambled half-guesses, careful accredited advice, sacrilege, audio-visual recordings of all sorts of thing, all that is heinous that occurs in people's imaginations in the course of a day nearly anywhere on earth, reams of paranoid conspiracy, collections of the finest reasoning and compilations of cultural treasures, huge compendiums of knowledge, schematics to build bombs, recipes for vanilla cookies, and who knows what else: roughly seven billion pages of it, all mashed into a hypercomplex that is for most practical purposes (excepting censorship and a thing called the shadow



drawn by Ben Batchelder

## Vol. 39, #4 · The Omen

web) uniformly accessible from any single computer to which it is attached. It's whatever.

Any rational person in our time has to recognize the disappearance of simple unity from our perspective on the world and has to point out the internet as the cause. Of course, the world never had a simple unity; what differs is our perspective on it. While simple worldviews don't seem to match the universe that has been shown by science, there is also a longing to make sense of things in such a way that you can stop worrying about the problems of life. By opening the gates on the world from an infinity of directions, the internet has revealed to our eyes the fact that more is going on than was ever previously available to the attention of human beings, whose acquaintance with the world in the past was curbed geographically and hedged in by a slower communication systems. To put it shortly, our eyes have been opened up to a dizzying number of events but we have no good ways of making sense of it in common circulation. It might be making us sick.

On the other hand, there is a sense of intense enhancement that one can find in the judicious use of the web. The internet creates a tempting illusion of omnipotence. To put something on the web multiplies our voice to infinity. But this is also the true for everybody else's voice and so each one gets drowned out by the next like dissonant waves. Besides the sheer size and evident indifference of people to one another on the web there is also an issue with identity. Self-representation is common on the web. Speaking for myself, I can't help but feel that my interactions on the web are somewhat unnatural, stilted, and snubbed. I suspect this has to do with the minimization of certain sensory cues that we get from normal face-to-face interaction. Our true nature, built in with a need for warmth and fellowship, cannot be satisfied by the web, which puts fathoms of machinery between us. I have found that I have to consider ethics anew in this sphere of indirect communication.

It's information, information everywhere, sloshing rigidly in a bizarre and insensible parallel world. But what is information? In scientific terms, information is simply that which reduces uncertainty. It is what reduces the categories down into which a message can be interpreted. We would agree that the message

## The Omen · Vol. 39, #4

“Go to the store and buy something” contains less information than “Go down the street to the left and go to the store with the big red sign on top and buy a single bottle of milk.” The added clarity of the second statement is a consequence of its form specifying fewer possible interpretations than the first statement. It more resolutely demolishes ambiguity. From what I understand, that’s information.

One might expect the modern extravagance of information to make the world picture out to a more certain, clear place, it actually does very little to reduce much uncertainty for the ordinary person. It gives a proverbial cluster-fuck. An overload. Whenever I am searching for hard to find information on the web, I am not thinking about the carefully crafted contributions of leagues of human beings as I hurry past countless strings of text scattered all about. Anybody who takes the time to picture things a few steps beyond their firsthand encounter with the web gets sight of a huge frothing digital mass, and there is no simple way to come to an understanding of it all as a neat composite. Undeniably there are agent programs swimming about the web that collect vast data at super speeds, feeding this data into anticipatory algorithms used by individuals, companies, governments and other agencies to predict trends in society, guess what consumers want to buy, gather fodder for science, and attend to other interests. It is also conceivable that information resulting from these data collections lead to individuals with a large stake in digital real estate to make changes on the internet, which in turn affects how people behave with it, and the whole deal repeats when they go about mining more data on the new way people are behaving, giving rise to a self-perpetuating cycle. This access to big data creates the prospect for great influence in the hands of centralizing institutions like Google, but over a system which we are only beginning to understand, and whose pull on worldly events is open-ended. Knowing a thing or two about history, one can bet that entrusting that much power to anybody is probably a bad idea. Often, in attempting to willfully shape things, unforeseeable complications proliferate and jam up our schemes. This is conceivably the case even when what is doing most of the foreseeing is not people but computer programs. Extrapolate this principle to the internet at

large, and the chance for our meddling to go wrong is firmly pronounced.

Nobody really knows what we are getting ourselves into. In the eyes of ordinary folk this algorithmic underworld is a total blank. Raising it to awareness can even be intimidating. A body might feel, creepily, at the mercy of an insectoid company of abstract machines, subliminally processing and acquiring details about one’s activity on the web. Taken to one extreme of the imagination this can be seen as the rumblings of sci-fi nightmares. We put aspects of ourselves, our thoughts and feelings and desires, into data that gets munched up by little inhuman computational bugs, copied however many times, printed and stacked and sorted and multiplied.

There are at least two options when it comes to the unknown—curiosity or distrust. Because so much is impersonal and anonymous on the internet, distrust factors into a lot of decisions about encounters that happen over it. Just looking at international relations over the web gives a decent enough surmise of how crazy it is. New theaters of intrigue, played out over indirect geographically delocalized actions, work through the internet. One only has to read up on the potential for a cyber-war among international powers-- U.S., Israel, China, Japan, Russia, South Korea, Iran, Saudi Arabia-- to get an idea of how much potential for global fuck up there is. Companies get hacked, data stolen; viruses implant in facilities, break machinery; agencies preempt and guile one another in a disembodied clash. Not long ago the Pentagon announced that it would interpret as an act of war any cyber-strike on a government or civil network by a foreign agency. That is particularly scary when cyberespionage between governments can only be conjectured to exist. So veiled can be made the distinctions between state and individual actor on the web that nobody can ever be absolutely sure of who did what if the perpetrators acted professionally. The dependence of business and organizational relations on computer-mediated information networks opens society up to much subterranean vulnerability. As society hangs ever more dependent on computer networks, the potential cyber-antics has for disrupting the fabric of civilization is ever more widespread and severe.

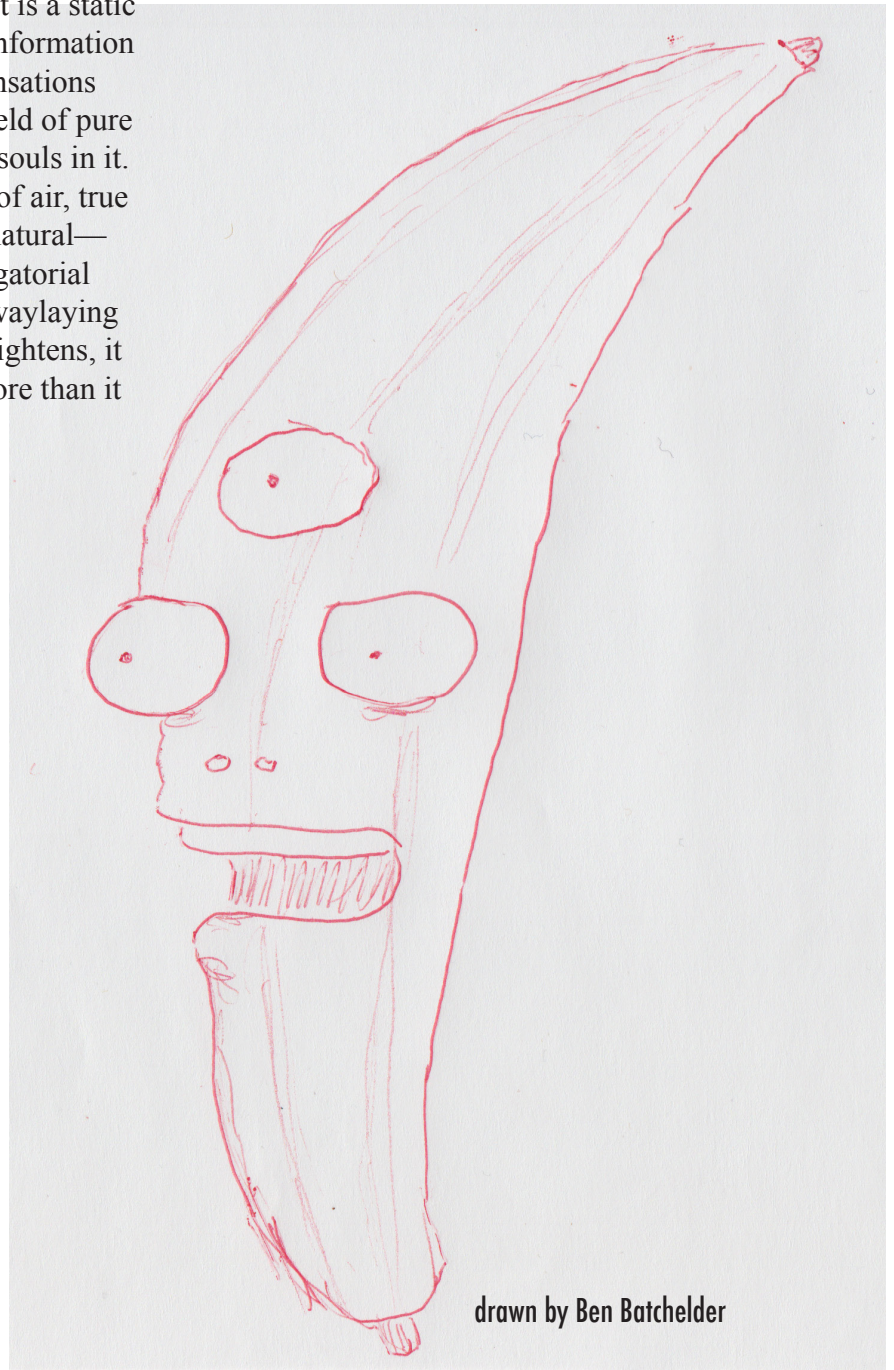
No matter who you are, chances are good that someone has searched your name and researched it—for whatever countless weird reasons motivate them. While that is not itself that big of a deal, it’s easy to



imagine how it could devolve into a bad situation, considering the world's ample supply of crazies. What's worth worrying about is whether or not we have created a system which has gone out of our control and exerts undesirable effects.

Another issue is the simple physicality of using the web. Humans are three-dimensional creatures, and we know things, typically, in three dimensions. Somehow the screen flattens all that, snubs perception. Subordinating our bodies to this interface awakens many kinds of pains and disjointedness: back problems, carpal tunnel. Yet this subordination is necessary to sustain the whole functioning of civilization as we know it.

This only scratches the surface. The internet is a static electric cave filled with dimly glimmering information minerals. It is a mute world, with no real sensations inside of it. It is a hollow space, a symbol field of pure machinery. We have no hope of finding our souls in it. To do that, we have to live out in the world of air, true space, and active bodies. The internet is unnatural—useful, profoundly so, but unnatural. Its purgatorial glow holds millions transfixed in a hive of waylaying light-speed fluttering data. It distracts, it enlightens, it habituates. The catch is whether it drains more than it gives.



drawn by Ben Batchelder



# SECTION SPEAK



## A Blog, of Sorts: The Gilman Scholarship and My Experiences in Amman, Jordan Spring 2012



When I was looking for a college, study abroad was one of those things that I knew I wanted to do no matter where I went or what I studied. During my second year, I went with two of my modmates to Guatemala to study Spanish and had a wonderful time, but I really wanted to spend a semester abroad. For my final semester of Div II, I decided on SIT's program "Modernization and Social Change" in Amman, Jordan because I had decided to shift my studies from Latin America to the Middle East.

In making this shift, however, I faced challenges because Hampshire (as you may or may not know) does not have "Hampshire Exchange" programs in the Middle East. Though, as Hampshire students, we have institutional approval to participate in an extraordinary number of programs or design our own program of study domestically (off campus) or abroad, for many students this is cost-prohibitive because of Hampshire's policies. As you may or may not know, students who wish to go on field study must both pay 1/3 of Hampshire's tuition and any additional expenses they incur, including tuition at other institutions.

IMPORTANT: if you have any questions about this or are interested in studying abroad, please DO NOT make any decisions based on the information here. Instead, please contact Financial Aid x5484 and/or the Global Education Office x6173. My intention here is merely to talk about my experiences; you should conduct your own research into your options using the College's official resources.

As I mentioned, I was interested in studying the Middle East and wanted to participate in a small program with a strong language component and live with a homestay family. These criteria led me to apply to SIT's Jordan: Modernization and Social Change program in Amman. The program components consisted of a lectures in "modernization and social change," two Arabic classes daily, an independent study period, and a homestay. There were additional excursions, both within Jordan and to Egypt (though our trip to Cairo was cancelled because of security concerns and instead we went to Istanbul, Turkey).

Once I had found a program that fit my expectations of a semester program and complemented the other work that I had completed during my Div II, funding became a serious concern. When researching my options, I found the Benjamin A. Gilman Scholarship, a program that offers scholarships to students with demonstrated financial need funding to study abroad. I researched the scholarship and discovered that I was eligible to apply. I completed the application and was ultimately awarded a scholarship that made it possible for me to go abroad.

My time in Jordan has shaped not only my studies at Hampshire, but also many aspects of my social and personal life. Without a doubt the two most valuable aspects of my time abroad were my homestay experience and the independent study period at the end of the program, though other aspects were also very influential. What follows is my reflection on various elements of my experiences while in Jordan.

### Homestay:

Living with a homestay family in a culture that I did not understand was one of the most challenging experiences of my life and it was one of the most influential elements of my time abroad. While I did not click with my family, I quickly developed a strong bond with them and we have stayed in contact since my return to the U.S. Though I had lived with a host family in a different setting, I did not understand the challenges that I would face when living with a family in Amman. The first significant challenge I faced was my diet, as I had been a vegetar-

ian for four years before going to Jordan and rarely ate full meals three times per day. By the end of my first day with my family, it was clear that I would have very little control over my diet and that I would have to choose between offending my family and regulating my own diet. Though I probably would have been able to convince them to leave meat out of my diet entirely, I decided that I would feel as though I were participating more fully in the culture if I ate meat with the family.

What were out of my control, however, were my portions. A typical meal was approximately five scoops of rice and two or three pieces of chicken... bigger than restaurant portions anywhere but at a steakhouse or something. This would not have been a big deal if I could have eaten what I wanted and then thrown the rest away, saved it for later or somehow only eaten part of it. Unfortunately for me, my family genuinely expected me to eat all of the food that they gave me at meals and it was offensive for me to refuse their hospitality by not finishing my food. I tried multiple tactics for food evasion. I threw food away in napkins, I slipped it back into the pot, I put it in my pockets, I hid it in tin foil and threw it away... you get the idea. The two times that I thought I honestly couldn't finish my food, my host father earnestly asked me if I had enjoyed it. Conveying that I enjoyed the food but was too full to finish my plate was, in practice, impossible. In addition to my food evasion tactics, I spoke with the homestay coordinator for my program and elicited the help of a few Jordanian friends and a friend familiar with the culture. The overwhelming consensus was that I had to keep doing what I was doing and deal with it.

Another challenge was my 9pm curfew (this applied to every night of week). My family didn't want me to be out later than 9pm, which was hours earlier than any curfew I had ever had and also much earlier than the other students in my program. While this ensured that I never had a chance to be in a compromising situation (no doubt my host mother's intention), it also meant that I was constantly rushing to leave whatever café my friends and I were at around 8:30 so that I could catch a cab and get back to my house by 9pm (to have dinner... 8:30-9:30pm was not a particularly pleasant hour for me). This was one of the more authentic cultural experiences that I had while living in Jordan, particularly because after about 9pm there were no single women walking the streets of Amman and certainly none of them taking taxis by themselves. While I understood my host mom's concern and appreciated her interest in my safety, it was also an intensely different environment

than living with my family in Colorado or, of course at Hampshire.

The largest challenge that I faced in my homestay experience was my inability to concert control over my daily activities. Being unable to regulate how much I ate or when, when I could leave and enter my home (I was never given a key to the house), and having to report my activities to my family every day was taxing. However challenging these experiences were, I was really excited to hear my host mother tell me that she thought I was very respectful and be accepted as a member of the family. They were very careful to explain various elements of Arab and regional history and culture that I otherwise would not have been privy to. By the time I left Jordan, I was fairly ready to return to American culture, but I was most upset to leave my host mother and the rest of the family.

#### Badia Homestay:

Part of my program was a four-day homestay in the rural areas of Jordan, referred to generally as the "Badia." I was one of four female students chosen to stay with Sheikhs in the Badia. In order to get to the Badia, we were given very vague instructions about which buses to take and had the family name as our final destination. If this sounds vague, keep in mind that the families we were going to stay with were approximately four hours from Amman. The actual process of arriving in the Badia involved traveling via bus with half of the group until we reached a seemingly insignificant intersection in a town that looked exactly every other town we had passed since leaving Amman. At this intersection, the bus driver stopped and started talking to an old man in an old yellow Cadillac. The two men were showing each other papers and speaking quickly in Arabic and the conclusion of the conversation was that I was supposed to go with them, but not anyone else. I was definitely not going to go by myself so I made it as clear as possible that I was not going to go alone and waited until they compared papers a few more times and decided that two other girls were supposed to go as well. The four of us piled into this old Cadillac and drove to a nearby town (about 20 minutes) and finally pulled up to a rather quaint house with a simply decorated sitting room. We learned that this was Sarah Rose's (one of the other students) host family and after having tea with her host father for about half an hour we were again on our way.



Mollie (the other girl in the car at this point) and I were still not sure which of us would be staying with the man driving the car. This became clear when we pulled up to one of his two houses (the other apparently houses his second wife—who hates the first wife, for reasons we didn't know enough Arabic to understand) and he started introducing us to his family. The family fed us lunch and we again had tea. The Sheikh with the yellow Cadillac began to show us pictures of his family's ties to King Abdullah (mostly through the Army) with great pride. Below is a picture of the Sheikh with the yellow Cadillac. I don't know his name because he introduced himself as "Baba" meaning "dad."



After a while, my host father finally came to the house. His name is Auwal and he took me to meet his family, about 20 minutes from the home of the Sheikh with the yellow Cadillac. It was clear that the Sheikh I was staying with was wealthier than the yellow Cadillac Sheikh and that he was a little bit more modern than the other men I had met that day. His living room was nicely decorated and his family seemed to be rather liberal. I lived in a room with my three host sisters, one of whom was older than me and two were younger. The eldest daughter was a student at the local university. I also had two host brothers but I never learned their names because I never really saw them. There were two other family members that I spent time getting to know: Tharawat (my host aunt) and



her brother, Mohammad.

I went with Tharawat to her job at a local hospital and health center. While at the hospital, I saw a child get stitches to his head and met the women who worked in the center. Afterwards, we went via ambulance to a different hospital, where I met one of the worst doctors I've ever even heard of. He had been educated in Russia (which is common of doctors who did not score well on the Jordanian national test but wanted to be doctors—in Russia these people can become doctors through doing little more than paying the tuition fees) and spoke English fairly well. He saw a few patients without examining them and told me his philosophy that “You don't actually need to examine every patient. You can diagnose the vast majority of illnesses by knowing the patient's medical history.” Practicing under this philosophy, I saw him write prescriptions for some medicine for “common cold” to a number of patients, most of which were children. Knowing nothing about medicine, it seemed pretty obvious to me that they had different illnesses, ranging from possible respiratory infections to rashes—the overwhelming majority of which were treated with some medicine for “common colds.” He was very interested in speaking to me, which made my host aunt nervous (or, potentially, irritated) so she left me with her friends to sit in the registration room. When I encountered the doctor again, Tharawat told me that he had been reprimanded for his behavior. Tharawat and I spoke for a while about how he was a terrible doctor and she described other instances when he had written off patients with various illnesses.

My time in the Badia was probably the period when my Arabic learning was most concentrated. Most members of my family did not speak English (Tharawat was the only person with reasonable English skills but she was very limited), so I had to communicate with them in Arabic. This was challenging, especially because the first question anyone asked me upon finding out that I am American was “What do you think about President Obama?” which, for obvious reasons, is difficult to answer with limited language skills. However, the family that I stayed with was patient with me and repeated words as many times as necessary to help me learn them.

I found the culture in the Badia to be significantly different than the culture in Amman. Familial ties (though important in Amman) were paramount in the Badia. It wasn't until my homestay with the Sheikh and his family that I began to understand what tribalism in Jordan actually meant and the ways in which it was

practiced. There were subtle indications, such as close proximity of the Sheikh to rest of his family and the ways that they interacted with others in the community—there was definitely a sense of the power that they held within the community. More broadly, one of the positions of Sheikhs is to be the leader of the tribal warriors and while this is more or less obsolete, it helped to explain the obvious communal power that the Sheikh held. As a foreign woman in this setting, I was able to act in some senses as a woman in the culture and in others as a foreigner. While I was, of course, never treated as a man, my the Sheikh offered to smoke *argeeleh* (hookah) with me—socially acceptable in Amman, but not in the Badia. Of course, I had to refuse so that the offer could not be taken flirtatiously but it was an interesting example of the space I (as well as the other foreign women in Jordan) held within the culture.

#### SIT Lectures:

Part of SIT's academic program was our lecture series on the topic of “Modernization and Social Change” which focused heavily on the influence of Islam in Jordanian society and the ways that the society is embracing or rejecting various “modern” social changes. This lecture was not actually a seminar in the traditional sense, but instead a lecture series (every class there was a new speaker) with a few papers thrown in after various trips. My major critique of these “classes” is that the speakers often were not sufficiently fluent in English to coherently make arguments or engage the class. Conversely, they offered us new perspectives multiple times per week, allowing us access to a number of perspectives that we otherwise would not have gotten while in the country.

Major themes addressed by the speakers included the roles of women in Jordanian society, economic development, the role of Islam, and U.S.-Jordanian relations. The lectures that followed the speakers were often interesting because the speaker would leave and it would be just the students discussing the topics of the lecture but moderated by one of the Jordanian professors. Though the SIT staff very rarely contributed to our conversations, when they did their interpretations were very interesting and often very conservative relative to our personal beliefs. Once, one of the professors told us that he did not believe in “gender equality” but rather

“gender justice,” meaning that he believed women were inherently different but that there should be ways for them to seek gender-based justice despite this.

However tough to get through some of the lectures were, others were excellent. The two that stand out to me still were by a woman who came to speak about feminism in the Arab world and various legislative initiatives being pursued in the country and another about the Jordanian economy. Both lectures reminded me why it was so important to learn abroad; they exemplified the sort of dynamic fusion between culture and politics that is impossible to understand out of context.

The second course that we took was a field methods course taught by one of the Jordanian SIT professors who also worked at the University of Jordan. As we all had expected, field methods were neither exciting nor incredibly relevant to our studies, though we did learn about IRB approvals and similar things. Overall, this course was definitely lackluster but we did have a few assignments that were engaging and generally interesting. During our third week or so in Jordan, we were all told to conduct interviews with various experts in the fields we were considering for our Independent Study Projects. For this assignment, I went to the Ministry of Political Development and interviewed one of the project directors. He had a very interesting perspective on youth issues in Jordan, namely that he attributed lack of youth political participation to widespread political apathy. His work aimed to alter this culture by connecting Jordanian youth with youth in the E.U. and other Arab nations.

Generally, I would say that the courses helped me to understand Jordanian culture, economics, politics, and society generally. I would not say that they were efficient in accomplishing these goals, but helpful nonetheless.

### Arabic:

The program’s academic strength undoubtedly lied in the Arabic courses and ISP. While in Jordan, all students completed two Arabic courses: one in Modern Standard Arabic and another in Amiyya, the dialect specific to Amman. The Arabic teachers were dedicated and the courses were relatively rigorous. I entered the program having completed 5 chapters of the textbook and my options were to begin at chapter 1 or chapter 11. Being a Hampshire student, I opted to try the more difficult level and struggled there for about two weeks before deciding that I wasn’t prepared and dropping down a level. Even though I wasn’t adequately prepared for level 3, I was happy with my progression in the course. I enjoyed learning both spoken and written Arabic and found the assignments to be generally high quality and dynamic.

In addition to assignments like going to a local market and asking what ingredients were used in specific dishes, we also had a few “Arabic Days” where we went around Amman with our teachers and practiced Arabic. For one of these days, we went to *wasat al-balad* and bought *thobes* (traditional women’s clothing in the Badia), as pictured below. We also went to restaurants as a group, ate *kehanfeh* (a cheese pastry), and spent a day at the University of Jordan doing a scavenger hunt. These activities gave us additional chances to activate and cultivate our Arabic knowledge. They also offered us an incentive to travel to places we likely would not have visited otherwise. I think that my Arabic skills benefited significantly from these activities and I found them motivating and engaging. One of the more fun activities we completed as part of our Arabic class was the final presentation. The most advanced group acted out a marriage game show and included “commercial breaks” advertising American movies like “Forrest Gump” and “Titanic.” A friend and I decided to make the national dish of Jordan *mansof* with my host mother, as well as *lazycake* which is a popular dessert in the country. We videotaped the process and then narrated it in Arabic, which was fun to do though perhaps more so for us than our audience.



### Taxis:

Most of the challenging situations that I faced in Jordan outside of my homestay family's house were met in the backseat of a taxi—with one notable exception, which I will explain shortly. Taxi drivers in Jordan are almost all men... to my knowledge there is one woman taxi driver in Amman, but she is not licensed and rather controversial. Also, I never saw her so for all intents and purposes all of the taxi drivers are men. The taxi drivers vary dramatically from taxi to taxi. Sometimes they want to talk to you in Arabic, which leads to an amazingly similar conversation every time. It goes something like this:

Me: I want to go to [insert poorly pronounced place]. Please. Turn on the meter please.

Taxi Driver: Where are you from? Me: America

TD: Where in America?

Me: Colorado, but I go to school in Massachusetts

TD: Where is Massachusetts in America?

Me: It is near New York.

TD: Do you study at a university in Jordan?

Me: Yes, at an American University in Abdoun.

TD: What do you study there?

Me: The Arabic language and political science.

TD: Are you married?

Me: No, I am a student.

TD: You speak Arabic very well.

## Vol. 39, #4 · The Omen

Me: Thank you, I am studying the Arabic language.

TD: You speak Arabic very well, but, well, you must practice more. That is the only way you will learn. You must practice with the people. If you do this, you will learn Arabic.

Me: Thank you.

If I lived in Jordan for another three months, I promise you I would be able to have this exact conversation as though I were fluent in Arabic (maybe not much else, but I would have this conversation DOWN.). With a few notable and humorous exceptions, combined with a few men who didn't want anything to do with me, this is literally verbatim the conversation we would have. It was the same in English and Arabic, with a few variations in questions from time to time. This past summer, my friends and I took a taxi while we were in San Francisco and while we were in the taxi, I asked the driver where he was from. He told me that he was Sudanese and I asked him if he spoke Arabic. We began talking in Arabic and immediately it was clear that we were going to have the EXACT SAME conversation that I had had with so many taxi drivers in Amman. He followed the script exactly, though our ride was longer than most of my rides in Amman so we got to talking about other things. But still, the fact that I can have this bazaarly similar conversation with taxi drivers in Amman and San Francisco sort of blew my mind. Also, it really impressed my friends, who had no way of knowing just how many times I had had the exact same conversation.

It should be noted that I forever destroyed my "in" with the taxi cosmos by failing to follow what is arguably the most important rule of taxi-ing in Amman as a woman: I sat in the front. Jordanians seemed split on whether or not it is ever OK for women to sit in the front of a taxi... but the only condition under which this would be acceptable would be if you were traveling in a group of four women and the other three were in the back. There are certainly people who would say that the group should take two taxis. While we generally tried to be culturally appropriate, we chose to follow the former etiquette rule and allow women to sit in the front, but only if there were four of us traveling and we were all women.

However, despite my best attempts to reconcile my relationship with the Amman taxi cosmos following my



grave indiscretion during my first day on my own in Jordan, I spent the rest of my trip struggling with small inconveniences every time I entered a taxi. Often, they would take me the long way and make me late to school. Other times, they would propose to me and hassle me with their phone number until I caved and took their card. Once a taxi driver drove around a taxi circle two entire times despite my protests before finally heading towards my intended destination. While it is true that most people encountered mischievous taxi drivers, by the end of my time in Amman the other students in my study abroad program still cited the ONE TIME that I sat in the front of a taxi as the cosmic source of my consistent problems. Needless to say, I only did it once; who knows if I would have survived a second infraction...

Istanbul, Turkey:

Our group was supposed to travel to Cairo as part of our program, but the soccer riots in early February made this trip impossible. Instead, our program announced that we would be travelling to Istanbul. While I was not particularly excited about this when it was first announced, upon arriving in Istanbul I was completely blown away. The city is very Europeanized and filled with absolutely stunning mosques and churches, in addition to lively street vendors and massive bazaars. While we only saw a small part of the city (much less the country—we never left the “European side” of Istanbul), it was breathtaking and engaging.

Many of our activities while in Istanbul were guided tours of significant sites with a Turkish woman. In addition to seeing many of the famous city sights, we visited a *hammam* or a traditional Turkish bath and Istanbul University. After having spent about two months in Amman, Turkey seemed like a different world—the city had an entirely different (and decidedly more liberal) feel to it. Though it was obvious that we were still in an Islamic society, religious symbolism was far sparser than in Amman. Returning to a place where transportation functioned on schedules and traffic laws were obeyed was a rather shocking experience at first. The significant increases in infrastructure were hard to ignore and had a noticeable impact on culture and movement within the city. Also, it bears mentioning that Amman supposedly has some of the worst sidewalks in the world—easily due to the large number of trees planted

in the sidewalk that are raising the tiles as they grow and the scores of multiple-feet-deep holes sprinkled in between the trees. Walking and texting could very easily (and, I’m sure, does) lead to injury in Amman. Turkey (and many other countries, it seems) doesn’t seem to have this problem.

One of our days in Istanbul was left for us to plan—a day to explore the city completely on our own. Two of my friends and I found a number of places we wanted to go and made a rough sketch of our planned destinations for the day the night before. On the day of, we found ourselves facing a mirage of obstacles. The first was that we took a train over an hour out of the Taksim area (where our hotel was) and into an area that supposedly had a market worth traveling for. We found ourselves wandering through a completely unfamiliar area where, unlike in Jordan, no one spoke any English. We eventually found the market when one of my friends brilliantly thought to go to an internet café and look up pictures of the market to try to get directions—it worked beautifully.

After leaving that area, we took another train and then a taxi to another market, this one even bigger than the first (it stretched like three city blocks and was absolutely packed). We wandered the streets and bought scarves (another title for this section could very well have been “that time I bought a lot of scarves... Yeah, I think that was Istanbul”).

We wandered around the area for a while then decided that we ought to be on our way, since it was getting a little late. It was then that we decided that we should probably figure out where the buses were and how we were going to get to our next destination. Such marked the first time in my life when I had been stuck somewhere unable to speak a word of the language and in dire need of someone who spoke English to give us directions. This is not to say that I speak a lot of Arabic (hardly) but at least I knew how to say “I need to find my house” or “I live \_\_\_\_\_” and be understood. No such luck was with us in Istanbul. We wandered around trying to find someone who spoke English but in the village no one seemed at all interested in talking to us, nor did they appear to speak any English. Feeling defeated, we decided to buy bagels and try to use an iPhone to figure out where we were. It was just when all seemed uselessly bleak when a man who had sat next to me without my notice started speaking to me in perfect American English. I was absolutely elated. He not only knew how to get us to the bus, but gave us directions to the cistern that we wanted to visit next and offered to

drive us himself (we kindly refused his offer). I honestly can't imagine what we would have done without him; to this day I have no idea where we were.

Transitioning back to Jordan from our fast-paced, nearly sleepless time in Istanbul was a bit shocking. We arrived in Jordan around 10pm and by the time the whole group was on the bus we it was around 11pm. I arrived home and had some of the same shock I had had upon moving in for the first time. I had to remember to speak very softly when speaking to my host mom, and to speak clearly and avoid slang so as to be understood. It took a full weekend to readjust to being in Jordan, but I was able to fully resume my life in Amman.







### The Southern Excursion:

After our classes finished (but, unfortunately, before our finals) we went on a trip to the southern region of Jordan to see many of the tourist sites that we likely would not otherwise visit. These included the infamous Petra, an ancient city carved into the hills of present-day Jordan, as well as Wadi Rum and Aqaba. Our first stop was to Dana, one of very few nature reserves in Jordan. Our tour guide in Dana was an exceptionally quirky and charming man who made jokes about “the old days” and knew a great deal about the plant life in the area.

Our next stop was the infamous Wadi Rum, where we went on a Jeep tour (something I never would have thought to do) and slept in tents. That night, we ate goat cooked traditionally, meaning that it was placed in a metal cylinder and lowered into the ground before being covered with hot coals and allowed to cook for several hours. We also received a dancing lesson from the SIT staff and were able to see the night sky with remarkably little light pollution. The next morning we went on a short camel ride (pictured below)—a real perk for another girl and me, as we both have been riding horses since we were really young. Wadi Rum was absolutely breathtaking—a desert landscape more beautiful than any place I’ve ever been.

After leaving Wadi Rum, we headed to Petra, one of the great marvels of Jordan. If you ever speak to

someone who has been to Jordan, almost without fail they will tell you about their trip to Petra. The entirety of Petra spans many, many miles but the bulk of it is located within a national park that costs about 60 Jordanian Dinars to enter (approximately \$85 per person). The SIT staff somehow got us in for 1 JD each. Jordan is all about who you know. Anyhow, the park is massive because it is a sprawling city carved into the hillsides, as opposed to a bustling urban center. The ruins were open to exploration and the sheer architectural feat of one structure alone was enough to give you a headache. We visited a sacrificial area, a monastery, the treasury (very famous), as well as many dwellings and areas/structures we couldn’t identify. After climbing approximately a bajillion stairs (which you feel only slightly better about because you know that 1. You will probably only have to climb them between one and three times in your lifetime and 2. You didn’t have to carve them in the first place), our legs were numb with exhaustion. It was probably the most we moved the entire time we were in Jordan. Actually, it was easily the most exercise that any of us got while we were in the country.

Our last day was spent in Aqaba, a port city located in southern Jordan. I had been to Aqaba before this trip because the Sheikh and his family had taken me there. It was nice to be in a more liberal area of Jordan and we were able to dress pretty casually when we were there (meaning dresses with scarves were acceptable). We went on a boat tour of the Red Sea, which was amazingly well preserved and clean. Our boat had a remarkably bad CD that was apparently on repeat, which



gave the whole experience a sort of weird vibe. The person who had made the CD had either just broken up with their girl/boyfriend or simply had no idea what kind of music Americans listen to and gave it their best shot. We're talking about two hours of eat-Ben-and-Jerry's-while-crying-while-you-wish-the-world-were-a-fair-place-and-Jack-had-lived, 1990s Celine Dion bad. Needless to say, it wasn't the type of music you typically listen to while snorkeling. However, snorkel to "My Heart Will Go On" we did.

I have never been a big fan of swimming and generally avoid any situation that could end in being submersed in water. However, how many chances do you usually get to snorkel in the Red Sea? So in I went. Salt water is apparently much easier to swim in than regular water, a fact that I imagine is common knowledge outside of Colorado (or maybe in Colorado, too, but no one told me). Anyhow, I was snorkeling around when I noticed that there were approximately two thou-

sand jellyfish swimming around me. This, as you might imagine, sent me into a state of panic and I desperately searched for my friend to ask her what we should do. Of course, this led me to kick her rather hard and the whole fiasco ended with me touching a jellyfish. Fortunately, the taxi cosmos seemed to be taking a break (or they figured this was outside of their jurisdiction) and once my panic wore off I realized that I had not, in fact been stung. I was overjoyed! Then, I decided I had better not risk any more sketchy encounters and retreated to the boat. On our way back to shore, we (read: the female students, males were explicitly asked not to join) received an impromptu dancing lesson and we danced the entire way back to the dock.



Group photo in Dana Nature Preserve



Walking through Petra



Riding camels in Wadi Rum



Site within Petra



### Ajloun, Wadi Ibn Hammad, Wadi Himara and Jerash:

During the ISP period, my friends and I took the initiative to see a bit more of the country. We went on two total trips, both of which were incredibly rewarding. Our first trip took us to Ajloun Castle and the Ajloun nature area, where we hiked for the better part of a day. We had missed our bus to Ajloun in the morning by about half an hour so instead we found a taxi driver who was willing to cram all five of us into his taxi and drive us an hour to Ajloun Castle. In accordance with my previously explained rules of taxi etiquette, the three other girls and I crammed into the back of the taxi and didn't speak to the taxi driver at all, really. Instead, he chatted with our male friend who had come with us and it was only when we arrived at the Ajloun Castle that we learned that the driver had invited us to his house for dinner that evening. We decided that however nice it was of him to invite us, we weren't sure it was a good idea and the interaction was best avoided.

After walking the castle we got a night at a hotel and headed towards Ajloun in a cab. While we hiked Ajloun, the driver who had offered us dinner called again and asked if we would be ready in two hours for dinner. We decided that, sure, we would have dinner with him and his family. We were all very surprised when he showed up, as promised, with his entire family and dinner. We feasted on *magloubah*, a traditional chicken and rice dish with salad and juice for the girls and non-alcoholic beer for the men. His family ate separately nearby, but he sat with us and we all had a chance to practice our Arabic. He then drove us all back into town and recommended a café where we could smoke *argeeleh*. Though we had all experienced Jordanian hospitality in several forms, we were all surprised at the kindness that the taxi driver showed us—it was imply unheard of in our culture. While we did pay him for some of his services, he undoubtedly gave us far more than we could return. It is one of the more striking memories that I have of Jordan.

After our night near Ajloun Castle, we headed to Jerash, a site filled with Roman ruins. It was pretty expensive to get into the interesting part of the park so we opted to walk around the shops instead. We saw one shop where people were making sand art in little glass bottles (a tourist staple in Jordan) and they offered to show us how it was done. After watching a brief demonstration, we were invited into the back of the store so

that one of the young men (about 11 or 12 years old) could practice his English with us. We talked to him about his life in Jordan and his ambitions and similar things and were having a nice conversation when it occurred to me that this could be a great chance to learn about *turbiyya wataniyya*, the Jordanian nationalism/civics course that was very related to my ISP. He described what he learned in the class and even ran home to grab his younger brother's textbook for the course. While we talked to the boy and his uncle, they brought us tea and popsicles and made a big deal out of hosting us. When the boy returned with the book, he gave it to me (despite my insistence that I would make do without it and many attempts to refuse it). As we went to leave, we bought several *keffiyas* (traditional Arab headdress/scarf), despite their insistence that we were not obligated to buy anything from them. They were the highest quality *keffiyas* that we encountered while we were in Jordan.

The other two trips that we took independent of SIT were to Wadi Ibn Hammad and Wadi Himara. Wadi Ibn Hammad was a gorgeous, almost tropic area inside of a gorge through which ran a small river of hot spring water. The hike through Wadi Ibn Hammad was literally in the water and we walked until we hit a point where there was a significant drop over a boulder. We hit this point and decided that we wanted to travel further, so a few members of our group went back and got the ladder we had been offered when we arrived. Once they got to the stand, they found out that the rope ladder was not, in fact, rope but rather very heavy wood. The boys carried the ladder the entire way to the boulder (over a mile) and using as much caution as possible we all descended to continue walking. We walked through the river for quite a while and found a small waterfall to play in for a while. When we started to get really thirsty we decided to head back. The ladder was a bit more precarious to climb up than to climb down, but we all eventually made it to the higher level. The boys carried the ladder all of the way back to the shack we had gotten it from and we made our way back to Amman. By the end of the trip, we all sincerely wished that we had brought water-friendly shoes.

Inspired by our trip to Wadi Ibn Hammad the day before, we decided to try to hike to what was supposed to be the largest waterfall in Amman, Wadi Hi-



## The Omen · Vol. 39, #4

mara. When we got to the trailhead (located under a bridge), we headed uphill. After walking for quite a while (and watching the stream get smaller and smaller), we finally found the source of the water. I have always wondered what the source of a stream might look like, but it should be noted that this was not at all what we were looking for. We headed back to the trailhead confused about where we had gone wrong and a bit disappointed that we had not seen a waterfall overlooking the Dead Sea as promised. It was later that we found out that we were supposed to have headed *down* from the trailhead. In retrospect, this makes complete sense. Oops.



Wadi Ibn Hammad



Jerash

**My Independent Study Project:**

One of the central academic components of my program was the Independent Study Project or ISP. This was our chance to conduct research in the country and tailor the program's theme to our personal academic interests. My project was titled, "Embracing the Dualism: The Arab Spring as a Catalyst for Increases in both Exclusivist, Jordanian Nationalism and Pan-Arabism in the National Curriculum of the Jordan." As the title implies, this paper focused on Jordanian nationalism and was focused on determining whether the Arab Spring had caused an increase in either exclusivist, Jordanian nationalism or in pan-Arabism within the national curriculum. My research definitely showed that the Arab Spring had not, in fact, led to any changes in the national education system. There are a number of explanations for this, but the most prominent are the fact that although education in Jordan has focused on identity formation and has been undertaken as an intentional state project, the Arab Spring has not resulted in significant questions about identity politics in Jordan. This is logical because the Arab Spring has not hit Jordan and the types of changes that any protests are likely to bring are far more focused on economic and political rights in which case identity is a very peripheral issue.

In addition to my discussion with the young man in Jerash, I met with a former Minister of Education and he spoke very openly about the problems in the Jordanian education system. My conversations with his son-in-law (my ISP advisor) and the former Minister were two of the most interesting conversations I had while I was in Jordan. Among many other things, the former Minister explained to me that the real struggle for Jordanian youth is political apathy and, interestingly, he brought this back to issues of identity, though outside of the framework that I had established in my project. He explained that there is a decline in the prestige of teachers and this had caused a significant decrease in the quality of instruction in the country. He said that this has created a highly individualistic culture within schools that undermines their ability to feel personally invested in the country, since this is students' primary form of interaction with the state. He believes that in order for the school system to improve, students must see themselves as Jordanians through a much deeper sense of both pride and connection to schools and teachers.

The written component of my ISP was the longest academic piece that I had ever written (if you don't count my transcripts from high school) and finishing it having

made a coherent argument and carried it through was a significant accomplishment for me. I was pleased with my final product, however wrong I had been in my hypothesis, and I think that the skills that I gained from working on the project will be of significant help to me in my Division III.

**Leaving Jordan:**

After our final presentations, the group took a short trip to al-Azraq to see one a desert oasis that had been drained to near annihilation, though there is now water being pumped back into it to try to resuscitate the resource/ecosystem. I should note that when I say "pumping" I am referring to the equivalent of one or two garden hoses worth of water. But something is better than nothing. Anyhow, we spent our last evening as a group hanging out in the hotel and checking out the stars. We also played a game of Jordan Monopoly. Aqaba and Amman are Boardwalk and Park's Place, though I can't remember which order they were in... in case you were wondering.

Anyhow, my actual last day in Jordan was spent running around town trying to make sure I had purchased everything that I wanted and generally feeling the nostalgia that comes with the end of an era. When I returned to my host family, I was relieved to see that they were out and I took the time to pack everything I owned and all of the things I had acquired into two bags and a backpack. My host mom surprised me with Turkish coffee and *zaatar*, both of which took the specific skills of a Jordanian mother to find the right version of. I had tried to buy *zaatar* a few times while I was in Amman, only to go home to our vastly better version at my host family's home. I still have no idea where she got it or the coffee, but it is solidly the best *zaatar* and Turkish coffee I had while I was in Jordan (though, admittedly, the Turkish coffee was slightly better in Turkey).

While I was generally ready to leave Jordan, my host mom and I had grown really close and we both sobbed uncontrollably when it was time for me to go. I think about her and my family in Jordan almost every day—I think that my relationship with them was one of the most rewarding aspects of my time in Jordan, if not the most.





**The Gilman Scholarship:**

I definitely owe a great personal debt to the Gilman Program and very much appreciate their support for my travels. I could not have gone abroad without their help and I am so thankful to have had the opportunity to travel, make connections, and grow while abroad. Though I realize that I could have had somewhat similar experiences on my own after college, I think that traveling for a semester has better positioned me for my future academic and career pursuits. I am a better and more capable person having gone abroad. Thank you.



**this article and the following page submitted  
by Amber Haggerty**





**Jordan as part of my Hampshire education:**

Because my Div II was not focused specifically in the Middle East (though it was a significant part), travel to Jordan served a number of purposes and also proved helpful in many ways. First, I was able to link my studies of Latin America and the Middle East by threading them together with my study of education and identity. In addition to offering me cohesion in my studies, I benefitted greatly from the perspective I was able to gain abroad. Here, I would like to state that for my purposes traveling with a group and living with a family were very important elements. Being with a group and taking courses in a setting heavily focused on discussion and language acquisition helped me to improve my skills in articulation and Arabic. My ISP was also very important to my time abroad and was actually a seemingly perfect way for me to tie together all of my studies during Div II, especially because I had previously had a rather disjointed and unorganized Div II. I was thrilled to have lived with a host family (no matter how challenging that was at times) because I was able to learn a sense of self-reliance and cultural awareness that I know I would not have otherwise gained.

The more tangible skills that I developed, particularly in completing my ISP, have proven very helpful as I undertake my Div III. Though my Div III is a much larger project and in an entirely different context (and on a different subject), I learned how to conceptualize and carry out a large project in a way that I had never been asked to do while at Hampshire before. The time management skills that I honed as well as the skills in seeking and utilizing resources when they are not as readily available as at Hampshire are proving highly valuable. Being in the Middle East for a few months has also given me a better idea of the things that I do and do not want from my future living environments and has also shaped my desires for my future career. I do not think that being a Hampshire student affected my time abroad much; however, having been abroad has certainly influenced my Divisional work, as well as my personal and social life. I strongly believe that the experiences that I had while in Division II worked in tandem to help me grow into a more holistic, balanced, and academically/intellectually capable person.



BENJAMIN A.  
**GILMAN**  
INTERNATIONAL  
SCHOLARSHIP



# SCHOLARSHIPS FOR STUDY ABROAD

**The Gilman Program diversifies the kinds of students who study abroad and the countries and regions where they go by awarding over 2,300 scholarships of up to \$5,000.**

## The Gilman Program Eligibility Requirements:

- Applicant must be a U.S. citizen undergraduate student at a 2 or 4 year institution in the United States
- Applicant must be receiving a Federal Pell Grant at the time of application or during the term of study abroad
- Applicant must be applying to a study abroad program eligible for credit at the student's institution of higher education in the United States
- Applicant must be studying abroad for a minimum of 4 weeks in one country (28 days)
- Study abroad program can take place in any country that is not on the U.S. Department of State's Travel Warning List or Cuba

## APPLICATIONS

**Access the online application at [www.iie.org/gilman](http://www.iie.org/gilman)**

Contact the Financial Aid and Study Abroad advisors at your currently enrolled institution to notify them you are applying for the Gilman Scholarship and to verify they are able to certify your online application. In order to complete and submit the application, applicants will select these individuals in their online application to identify them as certifying advisors.

Upload official transcripts from your current institution and any previously attended institution indicated on your application.

**The Gilman Program strongly encourages applications from:**

- Students attending community colleges
- Students from diverse ethnic backgrounds
- Students going to non-traditional study abroad destinations
- Students with disabilities
- First-generation college students
- Students in fields of study under-represented in study abroad

## Critical Need Language Award

Students studying a critical need language are automatically considered for the Gilman Critical Need Language Award (CNLA) for a total possible award of \$8,000. CNLAs are awarded to students studying abroad during a fall, spring or academic year term and a limited number are available each year.

## Critical Need Languages include:

- Arabic
- Chinese languages
- Japanese
- Bahasa Indonesia
- Korean
- Indic languages
- Russian
- Persian languages
- Swahili
- Turkic languages

## DEADLINES

For Spring Study Abroad  
**OCTOBER 2, 2012**

For Summer, Fall & Academic Year  
**MARCH 5, 2013**

INSTITUTE OF  
INTERNATIONAL  
EDUCATION

SPONSORED BY  
U.S. Department of State, Bureau of Educational & Cultural Affairs

ADMINISTERED BY  
Institute of International Education (IIE)



**APPLY ONLINE AT [WWW.IIE.ORG/GILMAN](http://WWW.IIE.ORG/GILMAN)**

Hello,

My name is Elana Willinsky and I am an intern for MassPoetry. We are starting our outreach process for the annual Massachusetts Poetry Festival and wanted to share information and to solicit your advice.

First, a little background about our organization: MassPoetry is an organization whose goal is to connect poets and poetry in Massachusetts with wider audiences. MassPoetry supports the efforts of all different poetry collaboratives throughout the Commonwealth. The MassPoetry Festival is an opportunity for all the organizations and poets involved in MassPoetry, plus anyone with a love for poetry, to come together for a weekend of creativity and celebration of the genre. If you'd like some more information, please visit our website: <http://masspoetry.org/>

This year's festival is being held on May 3rd-5th, in Salem, MA. Poets headliners at this year's festival include Sharon Olds, Yusef Komunyakaa, Terrance Hayes, Tracy K. Smith, Nick Flynn, Jill McDonough, Maria Mazziotti Gillan, Erica Funkhouser, Kevin Goodan, Steve Almond, Martin Espada, Gail Mazur, John Murillo, Aimee Nexhukamatathil, and Arthur Sze.

While these performances and presentations are integral to the Festival, the Festival is primarily about developing and supporting the community for poetry in Massachusetts. To that end, we intend to increase student involvement in the Festival by developing opportunities and programming specifically for college students. This involvement could be anything from volunteer work to writing workshops.

Among the ideas in the works is to expand the collegiate poetry slam, which has been very successful the last two years (standing room only). If you know of a slam team at your university, please share their contact information with us!

Finally, if you, or an organization you are a part of, would like to get more involved in any capacity, we would love to hear from you! We are also attempting to reach anyone and everyone who might be interested in the festival, so please spread the word. People can receive updates on all MassPoetry activities by signing up for our newsletter at <https://app.e2ma.net/app2/audience/signup/36072/21547/?v=a>.

For any further questions about the slam, please contact me, Elana Willinsky at [elana@masspoetry.org](mailto:elana@masspoetry.org).

Thank you!





**Mark Twain with Cats  
brought to you by John Gardner**

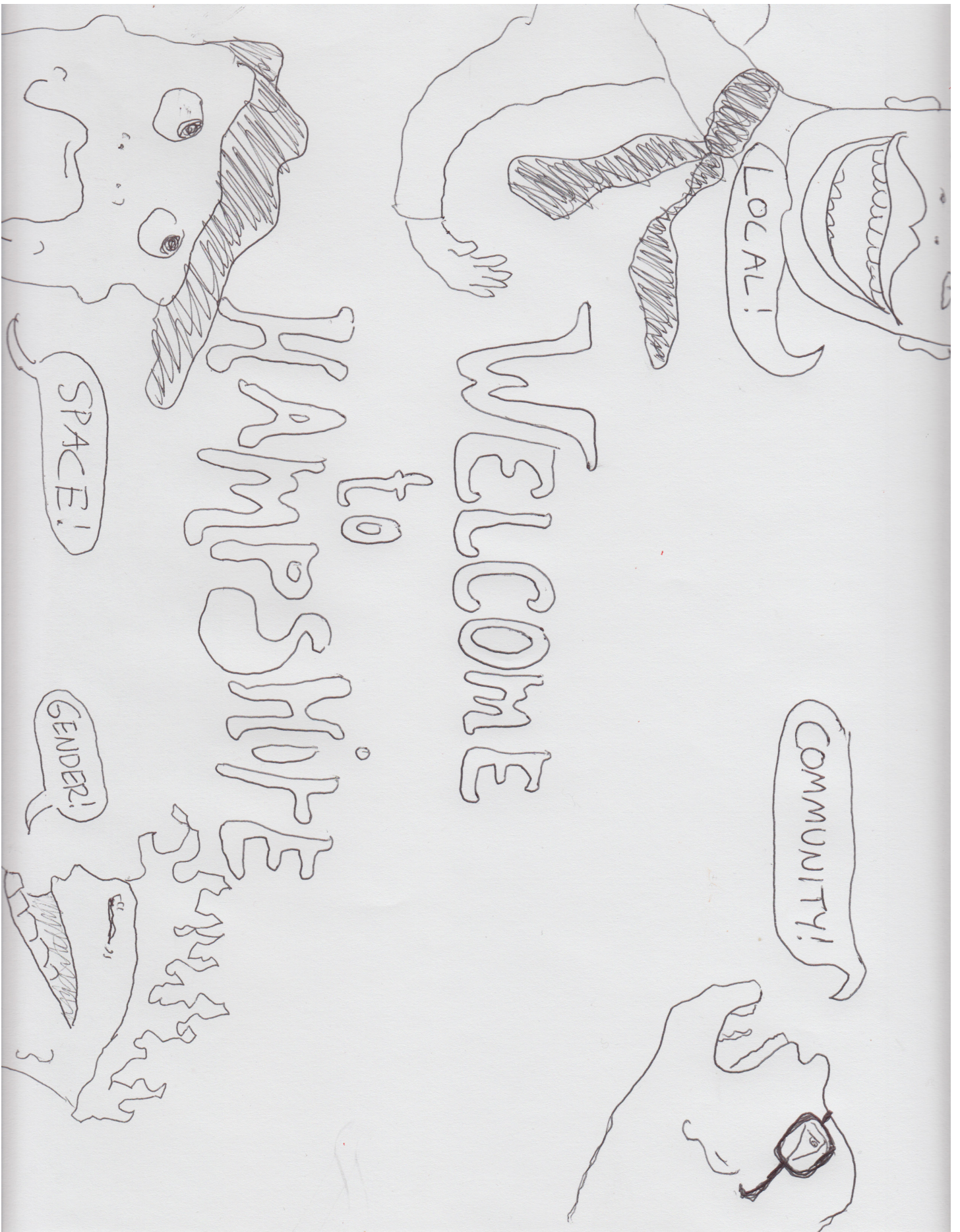




Of all God's creatures there is only one that cannot be made the slave of the lash. That one is the cat. If man could be crossed with the cat it would improve man, but it would deteriorate the cat.

Mark Twain, 1894









***Submit  
to the  
Omen!***